ISSUE #1

Parent Newsletter

NEW CANEY ISD COUNSELING

✦

MAY 2025



Understanding and Managing Stress in School-Aged Children

Helping Your Child Thrive Emotionally and Academically

What is Stress in Children?
Stress is a natural reaction to challenges and demands in life. For school-aged children, it can arise from various sources, such as academic expectations, social interactions, changes within the family, or even the pressures of extracurricular activities. While a certain level of stress can be beneficial and motivating, excessive or poorly managed stress may affect a child's emotional, physical, and academic health. Unlike adults, children may struggle to recognize or express their stress, making it important for caregivers to be aware of the signs and provide support.

For school-aged children, stress can be triggered by a wide variety of factors:

- Academic Pressure: Striving to meet expectations on tests, homework, or grades.
- Social Challenges: Navigating relationships or feeling excluded.
- Family Dynamics: Experiencing changes like divorce, a new sibling, or a move.
- World Events: Worrying about issues they hear about, like pandemics or natural disasters.
- Extra-Curricular Commitments: Feeling overwhelmed by sports, arts, or other activities.

Stress is not always harmful. In fact, a manageable amount can motivate children to learn and grow. However, chronic or overwhelming stress can interfere with their ability to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. Stress is a normal part of growing up, but with your support and the right tools, your child can learn to navigate challenges and thrive.

In this newsletter you can expect:

What is Stress in Children?

Psychological Symptoms of Stress

How to Manage or Combat Stress

When to Seek Help for Your Child

Resources for Parents



Psychological Symptoms of Stress

Children may not always express their feelings directly. Be aware of these common signs of stress:

- Emotional Symptoms: Irritability, mood swings, anxiety, sadness, or withdrawing from friends and family.
- Cognitive Symptoms: Difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, or negative self-talk.
- Behavioral Symptoms: Changes in eating or sleeping patterns, increased clinginess, or avoiding school or activities they once enjoyed.



When to Seek Help for Your Child

Sometimes, stress may require professional support. Consider seeking help if you notice:

- Persistent sadness, irritability, or prolonged anxiety.
- Physical complaints like frequent headaches or stomach aches with no medical cause.
- Sudden drop in academic performance or refusal to attend school.
- Harmful behaviors, such as self-injury or talk of harming themselves.

Reach out to your child's school counselor, pediatrician, or a licensed mental health professional if these signs persist.

Resources for Parents

Books:
What to Do When You Worry Too Much by Dawn Huebner
Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves! by Trevor Romain

Hotlines:
National Parent Helpline: 1-855-4A PARENT (1-855-427-2736)



How to Manage or Combat Stress in Children

As parents, you play a key role in helping your child cope with stress. Here are some practical strategies:

1. Create a Safe Space for Open Communication
- Let your child know it's okay to talk about tough emotions without fear of being judged or criticized.
- Use open-ended questions like, "What was the best and hardest part of your day?" or "What made you smile today?"

2. Establish Healthy Routines
- Sleep: Ensure your child gets 9–11 hours of sleep per night, depending on their age.
- Nutrition: Provide balanced meals to fuel their body and mind.
- Exercise: Encourage daily physical activity, which helps reduce stress hormones.



3. Teach Relaxation Techniques
- Practice deep breathing: Teach your child to inhale deeply through their nose for 4 seconds, hold their breath for 4 seconds, and exhale slowly for 4 seconds.
- Try mindfulness activities.
- Use creative outlets: Drawing, journaling, or listening to calming music can help release tension.

4. Encourage Downtime
- Children need unstructured time to relax and recharge. Make space for activities they enjoy, such as reading, drawing, or playing with friends.
- Limit Over-Scheduling: Help your child balance academics, extracurriculars, and free time to avoid burnout.
- Teach them to say "no" to extra activities if they feel overwhelmed.

5. Build Problem-Solving Skills
- Work with your child to break big tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
- Praise effort and progress, not just results.

6. Foster a Positive Environment
- Encourage family time and play.
- Model stress management by showing how you handle your own stress in healthy ways.

7. Limit screen time